

## The Sunday School Service.

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Absalom's Death.—2 Samuel 18: 24-33.

GOLDEN TEXT: "Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death.—Mark 7: 10."

## Introduction.

This lesson must be studied in connection with what precedes it. For want of time I shall not attempt at an exposition of the text, but give a few of the lessons to be drawn from the narrative. Besides, the text chosen for this lesson simply announces the result of what took place before. The death of Absalom was sad news to king David, but it was the natural result of a lack of parental training on the part of David and the reckless disobedience and irreverence on the part of Absalom.

When king David heard the news of Absalom's rebellion, he at once made preparation to leave Jerusalem. Soon after the desertion of the city by the king and his people, Absalom entered amidst the shouts of victory. David had fled, and Absalom and his officers held a council of war to determine what is the best thing to do—pursue David or not. Ahithophel advised Absalom to pursue the king that night and capture him before he crosses the Jordan. All the elders of Israel and the people were pleased with this saying, and if his advice had been followed, the king, no doubt, would have fallen an easy prey to Absalom. But Absalom called Hushai to hear what he had to say. He was told what Ahithophel advised them to do. Hushai was David's friend and he pronounced the judgment of Ahithophel not good at this time. He referred Absalom and his people to the strength of David's army, and advised them to wait until all Israel, even from Dan to Beersheba, be gathered together. His counsel was adopted as better than that of Ahithophel. This caused a delay in the pursuit, and gave David time to strengthen his army and prepare for battle.

David commanded all his people to remember his son Absalom and deal gently with him when they go to battle. He had not lost the affection of a father, and though his son rebelled, yet would he not have him slain. "The battle was in the wood of Ephraim; where the people of Israel were slain before the servants of David, and there was great slaughter that day of twenty thousand men. This was a grand victory for David. The death of Absalom is recorded in 2 Samuel 18: 9-17. When the king heard the news of Absalom's death, he went up into his chamber above the gate and wept most bitterly.

1. We recognize here the finger of God in the prosperity and adversity of nations. "For the Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom." It was God's design to punish Absalom for his sin, but David himself was not guiltless before God, and the consequences of his sin were fast coming upon him. Over every battle that is fought there sits a higher judgment than that of man. There is one who decides the destiny of man, and we should never forget to give praise to him who rules the universe, and makes all things work together for our good.

2. The rebellion of Absalom was partly the result of David's negligence. According to the law, Absalom deserved death, but in the eyes of a higher equity the guilt rests not alone on him. It is shared between him and David. His loose training, want of firmness ruined the youth of Absalom, and though he committed the deed, yet David will be held partly responsible for the training he lavished upon Absalom. Society punishes the guilty son, but God withholds part of the judgment for the negligent father. The next generation will be just what we make it, and to a certain extent we will be held responsible for the sins of the people following us. Shall not we be called to an account for the lax morality, Sabbath desecration, intemperance, &c! We are not wholly but partly responsible.

3. The disobedience and rebellious spirit of Absalom and his sad fate, is a lesson for every youth of our land. "Honor thy father and mother," is a command, the violation of which will bring ruin as certain, though not as speedy, as a violation of the command, "Thou shalt not kill," or "Thou shalt not steal." Every one knows the inevitable result of murder and theft. God has not said why we shall not murder, but he has said why we shall honor father and mother: *that our days may be long upon the land.* Has not this been the universal experience of mankind? My young friends, would not Absalom's days have been longer on the earth, if he had remained with his father, obeyed him, and labored in his interest? Certainly. His disobedience and irreverence brought death upon him early. Show me a boy or girl who has no respect for parents, who treats them with irreverence, and I will show you one who will

likely reach an untimely grave. Remember the story of Absalom.

4. Yet David mourned for his disobedient son. Many a father and mother might mourn for a son in prison or reeling on the streets, drunken, but let them lament not so much the loss of their son, as the cause that led him to ruin. Well might David ask: "Is the young man Absalom safe?" He should have asked this question, as every parent should, when the child Absalom climbed his knee. It was too late then. David knew that his bad example was the result of, all his trouble and this thought deepened his anguish. "Whatever a man soweth that shall he also reap." Be careful what kind of seed you scatter. Every act and thought of your life is a seed and what your harvest shall be depends on the kind of seed you sow.

## "Save Me from my Friends."

The above sentence may be adopted by the Indian with as much propriety and uttered with as much earnestness by him who first, or anyone who has since, felt himself in danger from the effect of well meant but unwise action of friends. Zeal without knowledge is scarcely less dangerous to a good cause than the cunning opposition of those who openly oppose it; sometimes it is more fatal. Sympathy for the poor Indian and zeal in his cause have, within a few years, developed much more rapidly than has the knowledge of the Indian question. There are thousands of people privately or publicly demanding justice for the red man, to one who fully understands the Indian's character and the policy that is needed to be adopted, if that much misunderstood and greatly wronged race is to be preserved from extermination, and ultimately become free, independent, intelligent and useful citizens of this nation. This statement will hardly be questioned. Our observation convinces us that there are many excellent people who think they have mastered the Indian problem, who really know very little about it, but who, unfortunately for the Indians, honestly think that they know all that is necessary to enable them to formulate an Indian policy that is perfect in all its essential features. The writer meets representatives of this class quite frequently. Some years ago (1875) I met a distinguished clergyman of New York, and in the course of an informal conversation, I mentioned the fact that I had been greatly instructed as well as entertained by a lecture in Cooper Institute Hall on the Indian question, the lecturer being Col. A. B. Meacham, and this the first time I had the pleasure of hearing him. I was surprised at the response that my remark called out, "Yes, Col. Meacham is a very eloquent speaker and an excellent man, honest and earnest, but he don't know anything about Indians."

I said, "Why Doctor, I was impressed with the Colonel's vast fund of facts drawn from his own personal observation and experience among the Indians, much more than by his eloquence. I knew that I had only a theoretical knowledge of Indians drawn from history, written by the foes of the Indians, and here is a man, I said, 'who can instruct me and enable me to revise my opinion on the Indian question.'"

"Oh, his facts are all right, but his policy is wrong. I've got an Indian policy that I know is sound, and it's the policy that must ultimately be adopted and I believe will be."

This policy I learned was capable of being summed up into the following formula: "Immediately depose all Indian chiefs, break up all tribal relations, force land in severalty and full citizenship upon all nations, and then establish schools among them to educate them in literature and the industrial arts."

This man had, like myself only a second-hand knowledge of Indians. He was therefore entirely ignorant of the Indian as he is in his real character and in his native home, with traditions, habits and customs, inherited from a long line of patriarchal ancestry, whom he holds in profound reverence, and whose teachings form the basis of the religion of his life and the guide of his conduct. He did not, could not know, that to attempt to compel the Indian to become a white man at once would be a disastrous failure, unless the object were extermination. Col. Meacham held, that to successfully change the Indian into a white man (that is, make an American citizen of him), we must recognize his manhood, treat him and his religion with respect, keep faith with him as a people, and as a nation, and kindly, but persistently teach him our religion, our literature, our modes of civil life, our laws and our domestic habits. After nine years of special study of the Indian and the Indian problem, I am firmly convinced that Col. Meacham's policy is sound and practicable, and that of the Rev. Doctor referred to, false and dangerous.—*The Council Fire and Arbitrator.*

## Giving.

BETTIE WARE.

Not long since, a bright, hopeful boy told me of his plans. He was preparing to enter Butler University; thence he would go to Bethany College; and after graduating there, would become a minister.

About two months later I met him, and asked if the college plans were still uppermost in his heart.

"Oh, no," he said, "I have not been well of late. So I think I had best devote myself to business, and give several thousand dollars to the cause; in the meantime take care of my health."

A common, but, alas! fatal mistake. As though all of the gold in the world could equal the good wrought by one pure and upright character in "the cause." It is men and women that Christianity needs; those who are willing to throw all of the force of a beautiful life into its ranks. Not that the gift of money is not acceptable and needed, but there are so much higher, grander gifts than that of mere dollars and cents, and if they lie within one's power then one must give them and money too.

Besides, this thing of saving one's self is selfish after all. If Mrs. Browning, in her delicate health, had acted upon that principle, the literary and moral world would have been poorer to-day.

Then the first and greatest principle in giving should be that we give ourselves without regard to time or health; we owe it to that question to be a man or woman, and at the same time to be willing to live or die for it. In living for a great principle we do infinitely more good than he who founds a school of philosophy, or proves some great theory in science. The great forces in the progress of the world are moral and not intellectual. Therefore the best and highest giving has its foundation in the moral sentiments. The poorest and most ignorant can be met upon this ground.

"Among the untaught poor  
Great deeds and feelings find a home,  
That cast in shadow all the golden lore  
Of classic Greek and Rome."

It is strange, yet it is true, that no lasting good was ever done in the intellectual world, that was not done because some great soul was striving in some way to better the race. Dante was disgusted with condition of the state and of the church in his time. With the great hope of making men see the justice that should be in one, and the truth that should be in the other, he wrote those great poems, which are more famous four hundred and fifty years after his death than ever before, and at the same time conferred an invaluable gift upon the Christian world. Longfellow's translation of one of these poems, the "Divina Commedia," was a legacy to the English speaking world. Earnest convictions we must have; without them we cannot hope to do anything outside the material world, that is helpful or permanent.

The moral usefulness is broadened and deepened by learning. It is made more attractive, more charitable, more patient. Think you that Milton's knowledge of Latin and Greek lessened his influence among his Puritan brethren? Nay, it enabled him to give the largest and highest expression to Puritanism, a gift that no other advocate of that religion was capable of making.

It is a great test of generosity to be willing to give one's time. Just before the civil war, when Wendell Phillips was asked by some western friend what his terms for lecturing were, replied, "Fifty dollars and expenses, for general subjects, but will pay my own expenses and lecture free on the subject of slavery."

In our city a gentleman and a student of art, who has lately been to Europe, has carefully prepared a series of lectures on his observations while abroad, one of which he delivers each month in his church free. The sacrifice of time necessary to prepare these lectures, and to read them, is a gift for which the people of Indianapolis can not be too grateful. Such actions are grand, but they are appreciated: but to give one's time in listening to the platitudes of aimless and frivolous people is often a severe trial, yet here is one of the greatest opportunities for doing good; for every one of these people have some good in their hearts, and it may be your privilege and duty to awaken some aspiration in their souls.

To be willing to put your own sorrows and hopes in the background, and to listen attentively and sympathetically, is not without its high moral effects. The disappointed ambitions and the broken ideals that make lonely hearts hungry for a sympathizing friend, teach them to appreciate him or her more than the greatest gifts that material wealth can procure.

In giving to the poor, why must we ever give them meal and potatoes? They often

have a keen love for the beautiful, which, for the lack of culture, is too often rusted or dimmed. The gift of a flower, a book, a picture, even a dainty bit of clothing, will often start the tear of gratitude. It is the quick response on their part to the fact that you recognize that they have in their souls that which rises above the sordid side of life.

I might carry this thought still further into detail, but I am more than content if I have shown that the great principle underlying this subject is to give that which refines, ennobles, exalts, "to help to carry out God's intentions in the creation of the human race, to co-operate with his designs, to work toward his ideals—in fact and in fine to assist in the progress of the world," that everything you do "by which man is refined, purified, or benefitted, by which society is improved, upheld and advanced, by which life is rendered less 'illiberal and dismal,' by which humanity is really civilized and carried forward," is a gift to both God and man. And that you can only do this by being a Christian man or woman in the grandest and noblest sense. I think we will all agree with Lowell that

"When all have done their utmost, surely he  
Hath given the best who gives a character."

## CHIPS AND COMMENTS.

BY J. P. MARTIN.

Teach the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." If we were to heed the injunction of our Savior more, and to pay less attention to what man has to say it would be better for us.

It seems to be true, "like priest like people." It took Beecher many years to lead his congregation from a simple faith in Christ to "evolution," another steps and it will be infidelity. Had his flock, like one of old, sat more at the feet of Jesus and less at the pastor, it would have been a long time before he could have accomplished it,—not this side of eternity.

"Judge not that ye be not judged." "For that which you sow will you also reap." Yes, the man that is the most vehement in accusing his neighbor of stealing, is the fellow that fraudulently unroofed his widowed sisters children. The man that calls you stingy and mean, is the one that keeps a big dog to drive away beggars.

If you call your neighbor a liar you need not be surprised if he gets mad and wants to fight.

If you go about telling every one that your neighbor is a mean, disreputable fellow, you need not be surprised if you hear of some one telling about the neighborhood that you are a tattler; don't get angry, for just as like as not he is about right.

If you complain of having no friends or neighbors, it is a sure indication that you are not worthy of friendship. If you want a calm life, sow it. If you want friends, be a friend. If you don't want people to talk about you don't talk about them.

Have you seen the man that is so deeply offended when he sees his neighbor do a little chore on Sunday morning? Well, what of it? Oh, nothing, only we thought you had counted the dailies he read last Sunday morning, notwithstanding the fact that his little girl wanted him to help her with her Sunday school lesson, and he had no time.

If you don't want the dog to bite you, why just stay away from where he is and don't beat or molest him.

It has been our experience that the man who will kindly tell you of your faults is worthy a hundred times more of being called friend than he who in your presence will about next thing to call you a saint, and the moment your back is turned call you something ugly.

If we could always keep behind the social screen and see the skeleton that is often lurking there, much of our pleasure would turn to disgust.

Yes, we are met with smiles and made oh, so welcome, and yet we are scarcely gone until, with a sigh of relief, our late hostess remarks: How glad I am they are gone.

## Do a Little.

Many a christian destroys his peace and usefulness because he is not willing to do little things. He wants to speak and pray well, eloquently, edifyingly, or not at all. Because he can't do something great he won't do anything. If all were willing to add a little to a prayer-meeting, a Sunday school, or to the strength and influence of the church, there would not be so many praying to be excused. If we were willing to be weak, make simple prayers and speeches when we can do no better, we should pray oftener, better, and in every way do more good. Happy is the man who is willing to do a little, to be the servant of all, a door keeper, bell ringer, fire builder, lamp lighter, anything that will serve Christ in the house of God.